



Bureau of Transportation Information  
700 SW Harrison  
Topeka, KS 66603-3754

## NEWS RELEASE

July 28, 2008

08-256

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

News Contact: Stan Whitley or Steve Swartz, (785) 296-3585

## **Recommendations made to improve local bridge inspection program in Kansas**

Recommendations designed to improve the timeliness and quality of local bridge inspections in Kansas were announced today during a news conference in Topeka.

“KDOT and our local partners must do a better job conducting local bridge inspections in accordance with all the criteria set forth in the National Bridge Inspection Program,” said KDOT Deputy Secretary for Engineering and State Transportation Engineer Jerry Younger. “Simply put, Kansans should expect the bridges they drive on to be inspected at the frequency and accuracy level specified in federal law.”

To meet that expectation, a Kansas Local Bridge Task Force was created. This task force is composed of representatives from KDOT, the Kansas Association of Counties, the Kansas County Highway Association, the League of Kansas Municipalities, the Kansas Section of the American Council of Engineering Companies and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The 19-member task force was charged with identifying and evaluating measures that local governments and KDOT could take to improve the inspection process of bridges under local jurisdiction.

Five options were identified and carefully examined by the task force. One option will

be implemented and a second option is still under consideration to determine if it can feasibly be implemented.

**Option Selected** – This would provide increased KDOT oversight and quality assurance. KDOT would establish guidelines for inspections and the local public authority would use those guidelines in consultant agreement to perform inspections. Inspections performed under this option would be paid entirely with local funding.

**Option Under Consideration** – Locals would have the option of allowing KDOT to contract and administer their inspections. Under this option, KDOT takes complete responsibility for all aspects of bridge inspections on local roads. Inspections performed under this option would be paid for using a combination of federal and local funding.

Currently, local bridge inspections are to be regularly submitted to KDOT and reported to FHWA. All bridges on the State Highway System (U.S., Kansas and Interstate routes) are inspected regularly with most being inspected every two years.

The failure of the I-35W Minneapolis bridge in August 2007 was the impetus for an increased focus on the safety of bridges and the bridge inspection program in Kansas. The task force identified a number of problems with the local bridge inspection program in Kansas over a period of time from both internal and FHWA reviews.

“An examination of data records revealed a large number of overdue local inspections,” said Younger, who serves as task force chairman. “Just as concerning were the number of errors and missing data on the local inspection reports.”

The task force recommended three positions be designated within KDOT to handle the increased oversight and quality assurance responsibilities that will be required with both options.

The recommendations will be shared statewide with local units of government for their review later this summer before any final action is taken.

There are approximately 25,500 bridges in Kansas, with 20,425 under local jurisdiction.

###

This information can be made available in alternative accessible formats upon request.

For information about obtaining an alternative format, contact the Bureau of Transportation Information,  
700 SW Harrison St., 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl West, Topeka, KS 66603-3754 or phone 785-296-3585 (Voice) (TTY).

